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COUNTRY GENTLEMAN.



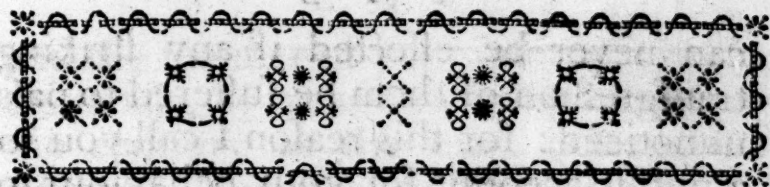
N O R W I C H :

Sold by R. BEATNIFFE, in the Cockey-lane, and J. and
C. BERRY, in the Dove-lane,

M D C C L X X X .



1608/296.



LETTER

TO A

COUNTRY GENTLEMAN.

SIR,

NORWICH, Sept. 22, 1780.

THE liberality of both the parties in this city, who were last week engaged in so strong a contest, has already consigned all the little personal disputes incident to such a situation to oblivion; the proper conclusion of all political differences of this kind. But to attain this in the utmost activity of competition, all parties must contain the spirit of opposition within certain limits, which must serve as the foundation for so quick a transition, which

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can never be effected if any striking transgression of them be suffered to pass unnoticed: for this reason I call you to a public account for your behaviour to the Rev. Mr. B. at Johnson's Coffee-house, on the Saturday evening preceding the city election.

THAT the points in dispute between you and that gentleman may be generally understood, I shall begin with your own last state of the transaction to which it related.

“ UPON the dissolution of parliament in 1774, Sir H. H. entreated you with very pressing instances to stand candidate with him to represent the city at the election then coming on: you yielded to those instances, and offered to sacrifice a sum not to exceed two thousand pounds for that purpose.” This is the account you gave to the committee at Tuck's, immediately after your dispute with Mr. B.—You did not add to this, that this business was to be referred by Sir H. H. to his constituents, to receive their approbation, before it was to be considered as a final agreement. At present I shall suppose your conduct,
and



and the manner of your interposition in this affair, to be as clearly significant of the contrary as the most determined negative language could have furnished you with. I shall afterwards go into my reasons for that supposition. It is necessary, however, to say here, I do not mean to affirm, that such a reserve might not have been stipulated in fact, a circumstance which much changes the character of this business: I am strongly inclined to think that it was; but the steps you took are to be understood as declaring the contrary. And it is from the point of light in which you made this affair appear, not from what has been since declared to be the real and actual state of it, that the declaration of the Rev. Mr. B. is to be acquitted or condemned. You did not state that Sir H. H. then laid before you any circumstances that rendered a junction with you necessary to the support of his interest. After this agreement he joined Mr. B. without previously communicating this change of his intentions to you.

I NOW come to the history of your dispute with the Rev. Mr. B.—he was at the meeting at Tuck's on the Saturday

day evening before the city election, where he was informed, that you had just declared, that Sir H. H. had made you an offer to bring you into the last parliament for Norwich for two thousand pounds. The information he received seemed to him derived so directly from you, as to admit of no suspicion of a deviation from accuracy; and to defend him against any charge of precipitancy in giving total credit to it. In this sense the account received was generally understood, and it was added, that you signified your readiness to authenticate it in form before that meeting. A Gentleman of the first consequence in the city waited upon you to request your attendance for that purpose, and at his desire the Rev. Mr. B. went with him. You complied with this application. In what manner ought you to have conducted yourself there? You could not have described the whole transaction with a precision too minute. Instead of that, what did you do? Being asked after this agreement, you affirmed in general terms, that such a treaty certainly existed, and gave authority to its being declared in your name. By keeping to general terms you gave a general ratification to the particular

particular articles contained in your former accounts of it. The Rev. Mr. B. imagined that the relation he had just received was thus formally authorized by you. The certainty with which every body thought they knew the terms of the treaty led them into one general error, that of not asking an exact specification of them. But the consequence you gave this communication, by having declared before hand your readiness to make it, and give it your full authority, tended to make them conceive that the matter could not possibly fall short of the ideas they had entertained of it, and that further specification was a formality without a use. Had the particulars been gone into as they were laid down by you at your second conference at Tuck's that evening, I shall presently shew the same consequences might have been deduced from them, and that the most oblique policy would not have wished to have intermixed such an inaccuracy with such materials : the hazard is great, and the gain nothing.

THE use which might have been derived from giving the most extensive notoriety to this treaty is evident ; the

efforts of the friends of Mr. B. and Mr. T. were held out as an attempt of a few opulent citizens to return their own representatives: it does not belong to the present subject to enter into a refutation of this charge; but it was one of the favourite topics of their opponents, and declared by an authenticated paper, which may be called an act of the party, to have been a very successful one; our nominal Members (it was argued) thus became Representatives of a part, and not the whole community. By joining issue with them upon these principles, this capital battery was taken away from, and turned against themselves: for we may observe, that as the number of these makers of Members decreases, their usurpation upon the equal rights of election increases, and that the nomination of a single man is the utmost possible invasion of these rights, unless we except the case of a Member naming his colleague, and thus making a Representative of a Representative.

THESE were the advantages expected to have been derived from propagating an account of your treaty with Sir H. H. in which, granting the arguments

ments advanced by his friends to be true, his conduct appeared to stand in a more direct contradiction to the principles on which his interest was supported, than that attributed to his opponents. The time before the decision of the contest was short; and if they had a mind to make use of those arms you appeared (stepping forth voluntarily) to put into their hands, they were obliged to avail themselves of them with promptitude; they could not too soon give an extensive notoriety to the compact between you. Accordingly the Rev. Mr. B. returned to Johnson's, and there said, "That at the last election Sir H. H. had offered to sell the borough of Norwich to you for two thousand pounds; that he had just heard you declare the truth of this at Tuck's, and give the authority of your name to the publication of it."—I come now to consider the grounds upon which every part of this assertion stands, with respect to the matter, the construction put upon it, and the authority to which it lays claim.

IN the account you gave of the treaty at your second conference at Tuck's you admitted, that you first proposed

proposed the specific sum of two thousand pounds, and that Sir H. H. closed in with your proposal: your original account had been understood by many people otherwise, they had represented that Sir H. H. had first offered to bring you into Parliament for that sum, and thus the matter stands in the Rev. Mr. B.'s declaration quoted above. The essential difference of these propositions deserves a moment's attention.—Sir H. H. opens a treaty with you to come into Parliament, one of these propositions makes him deliver in his plan and estimate together, the other supposes him first to propose his plan, and then adopt your estimate; and what a man formally agrees to becomes his act and deed in common with the proposer. Do not trouble yourself in ascertaining the difference of political criminality implied in these varying accounts; you will find it too difficult, and succeed more easily in pointing out an apparent distinction between two metaphysical indiscernibles. Shelter yourself, Sir, with a flimsy pertinacious pedantry in the verbal variation of these two modes of stating this part of the business; and dissemble a conviction you cannot escape, that with regard to the point in question

question they are equal in implication, and exhibit no trace of substantial difference. This variation, Sir, adds not a grain to the weight of the charge; if, therefore, it be an error, and an error I am ready to admit it to have been, as it could serve no purpose, it must have been committed without design, even if it had originated with the Rev. Mr. B. But it was common to him with many others, he received it from an authority of which he could entertain no previous doubt, and you must take upon yourself a great part of the imputation of that mistake, as you gave your name to the publication of an account, of which you did not recapitulate the articles.—I do not love to indulge myself in conjecture—but I should imagine the source of this error lies in the terms in which you might first mention this affair; that Sir H. H. had engaged to bring you into parliament for two thousand pounds, and that the first overtures in this business were made by him: words which might naturally enough lead to one sense, and yet be explained in the other.

YOUR last account admits this transaction to have been an absolute agreement

ment to bring a member into parliament for this city for a given sum. After you had stated the terms of this treaty with the utmost circumspection in your second conversation at Tuck's, from the sum of your declarations upon this subject, it was understood by the gentlemen present to have been virtually an affair of bargain and sale, and a minute of them was drawn up, applying those very terms to it, which was read over, and approved by every person present: the propriety of those terms, when applied to *your* account of the treaty, stands very safe under the authority of such a declaration.—I add to this, that the sole proprietor of a borough could not have treated for it more absolutely upon his own footing, than you hold out Sir H. H. as doing, in offering to transfer the Representation from Mr. B. to you.

BELIEVE me, Sir, if I could fix a construction of less imputation upon your second narrative, I would do it—an absolute compact of this kind anticipated by the wishes of the electors, though they had not been previously consulted, would have amounted, perhaps, only to an informality. But ask
yourself

yourself whether you be possessed of those qualities which might at that juncture have attached the attention and wishes of the electors to you? Can you plead hereditary confidence long placed in your family, and always well placed? You will be silent I suppose upon this head. Were you recommended to the public by the reputation of political ability and information? I have never heard that flattery has presumed to *whisper* it to you. There are qualities which are agreeable in private societies, which by the error of those affections they conciliate, bring their possessors sometimes forward into public stations; do you read your pretensions to those in the smiles of every man you meet? What claim can you produce to such an appointment, which is not abrogated by Grenville's act? If your treaty was, as it stands in your representation, absolute, apologized for by no circumstance of necessity, it therefore wears a more serious aspect than that of mere informality: if you continue to reject the constructive terms put upon this mode of privately treating away the exercise of the franchises of the electors, which were thus engaged for, when they were not called in to be
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of the party, there remains no other description of these stipulations but that of a clandestine compact, aggravated by a breach of confidence long reposed in one of the parties, to attempt to impose you upon the city by an act of power, or steal you in by surprize. If you think to find a safer retreat in either of these alternatives, embrace it: say that you meant your declaration could be only so construed, and you will have permission to make your stand upon that ground.—Such are the proper deductions from your last conversation at Tuck's,—you know what different modifications any transaction receives from a resentment which thinks itself out of danger, and want of firmness when it is called upon to give decided evidence. The Rev. Mr. B.'s declaration was founded upon an account dictated by the former, the only one then existing; the defence I set up for him, on the reluctant concessions of the latter.

I NOW consider the authority the Rev. Mr. B. received from you to make this declaration in your name. I have almost anticipated what I had to say

say upon this head, in the account I have before given of your first appearance at Tuck's; I shall only add here, (and it is almost repetition) that when you gave a general permission that it should be declared in your name that there had been a treaty before some persons to whom you had mentioned the particulars, you must be supposed to have referred for those terms to what you had previously related to them: for to give authority to publish a treaty, and not the terms of that treaty, is totally inefficacious; and we shall see hereafter, that you did not mean your interposition should be so.

PRESENTLY after this you came to Johnson's, where thinking yourself sheltered under the prevaricating distinction of not having verbally confirmed what you had referred to as true, and in that manner given full authority to the publication of it, and a suppression of the particulars of your late declaration, which together fully implied that you had advanced no criminating charge, you told the Rev. Mr. B. that what he had declared was an infamous assertion, or aspersion. I make no comment upon these terms,
but

but shall only endeavour to penetrate into your motives for so decided a disavowal. After you had given your first account, and declared your readiness to authenticate it, in the openest manner, you saw the discussions you exposed yourself to, and shrunk from the consequences of them: this made you restrain yourself to general terms at Tuck's, as you could not there withdraw the particulars of your former declarations before those persons to whom you had made them; but when you found yourself reduced to the necessity of disavowing the account of a private clergyman, or incurring resentments of which you stood in more awe, you chose the former; and there was prudence in the choice.

YOU were joined in your attack upon him by Mr. ———; he honoured Mr. B.'s account, with the terms malignant falsity, and cut-throat assertions: perhaps it was a new movement of grace in him; he was desirous of giving the first proof that he could attack a man in a cause in which he had *not* pledged his honour to support him: but as that resentment must be suspected of imbecility, which fixes on him as
its

its object, I shall therefore pass him slightly over.

THE intrepidity of your total denial very much astonished the Rev. Mr. B. but he was more embarrassed with the effects which he saw it might be probably attended with, in being turned to the detriment of that cause to which he was attached: satisfied with the defence which he knew it was always in his power to produce, he took it wholly upon himself; entered very little into particulars, and returned instantly to Tuck's, to announce this apparent change in your declarations, and desire the meeting there to be provided against the consequences of it. He had hardly left the room when you arrived; he followed you back; here you first endeavoured to keep your former declarations out of sight, or narrow down the sum of them with all the ambiguousness of retracting timidity: but the assistance you received from several people round you, and the regular forms of examination, extracted from your hesitating reluctant memory the particulars of the treaty stated at the beginning of this letter. Mr. B. gave you his reasons for using the constructive terms, implying that the city had been

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treated as a "Boorough" in this transaction, and decisively avowed the propriety of them, which you did not oppose: you still preserved a total silence upon the reserved condition which the supporters of Sir H. H. affirm to have been stipulated, that his constituents were to have been consulted previous to the engagement being fully confirmed; nor did you mention, that he stated to you at that time, that he was under a necessity of making such a proposition to you, to counteract the effects of a junction which he was apprehensive might be formed against him. At the conclusion of this conversation you offered to retract part of the colouring of your charge against the Rev. Mr. B. which offer, as it did not go to the substance of it, was rejected by him as insufficient. After you had both left the room, the paper I have before mentioned was drawn up, and assented to by all the gentlemen present, asserting your transaction with Sir H. H. to have been a treaty of bargain and sale. This paper was communicated to Mr. B. and intended for publication, but afterwards suppressed: some intelligent persons already began to suspect that the evidence in your account bore too decided an aspect; they remarked a probability

bility that the fallacy of your memory had kept some important proviso out of view, which should its existence be established by the opposite side, might produce bad effects to the party your narrative meant to support; a caution which very probably entered into the reasons of that suppression.

THIS seems to be a proper place to acquit myself of an engagement I made to you at the beginning of my letter, to show that your silence upon the existence of such a reserved condition, joined with the manner of your interposition in this affair, amounted to as clear and full a denial of it, as language could have furnished you with. But before I do this, I must premise one thing, that if we admit there was a proviso in the treaty, that Sir. H. H. should take the sense of his constituents upon it, before it was to be esteemed finally valid, it appears an ordinary transaction, apologized for by the common practice of all parties, though perhaps it may be more constitutional that such nomination should always originate with the electors. The charge with this addition is so weak, that it could serve no possible purpose of the opposite party, and ne-

ver would have been taken up by them.

THE consequence which you gave to your communication of the treaty, declaring your willingness before hand to be called upon in form to vouch it, vouching it in form with the authority of your name, the consequence the committee at Tuck's seemed to put upon it, by desiring your consent to have it directly printed, proves beyond the possibility of doubt that you meant it, and they understood it as no trivial charge; and as such, that your agreement could contain no conditional reserve.

NOTHING gives more effectual support to a cause, than endeavouring to fix a strong character of criminality to things perfectly indifferent, or to objections of little weight; it is easily wiped off, and the impression it leaves upon the mind is that of the general integrity of the party accused, and the inveteracy of that which advances the accusation. Your resentments to Sir H. H. were well known; if the reserved condition mentioned had been part of the treaty, a more effectual

tual support could not have been given him, than the advancing such a charge. Was it possible to imagine that inveteracy has not more discernment in the mode of wounding a man, who had been her friend, or that you would have run into such an error, if you meant to have it understood that such a condition existed? Your conduct therefore declared it not to exist.

By your own account, Sir, you stand as a *particeps criminis*, and the integrity of your political character was involved in that of the man you accused; the addition of that proviso to the treaty was necessary to your own vindication; your omitting it must be a proof to those who heard your narrative, that it did not exist, or they must have supposed you capable of garbling an account to fix an injurious imputation upon another man, though you were obliged at the same time to exhibit your own character in a light equally criminating.

THOUGH you may think I have been too long upon this head, I must beg leave to produce another proof of it. The private confidence of friend-

ship, Sir, is a sacred thing: subsequent injury cannot relax its obligation, otherwise its openness and unreserve must give place to that watchful suspicion which dreads to give arms to a future enemy: 'tis more than a delicacy of honour; the man habituated to the violation of the latter, ventures with new fear and hesitation upon the former, because the second space he has to fall through is much deeper than the first; and there is a great interval indeed between the imbecility of the one, and the infamy of the other. Yet there are degrees in this dishonour, and the lowest is when we turn purposes of obligation into accusations against the man who formed them. It was impossible, Sir, to conceive resentment would buy a trifling gratification with such hazard, the wound she proposes to inflict with such danger to herself, must be a deep one: she is not so enlightned in her bargains as avarice, and does not weigh the thing and the price with the anxious minuteness of a rapacious money-scrivener; yet she preserves some proportion between the object and the rate at which she must pay for it. When you step forward, Sir, to publish private conversation

versation as criminating matter, that step declared the accusation to be of importance; which it could not do, without denying that any such reserved condition, as that mentioned above, entered into your treaty.

IT has been moreover held out, that Sir H. H. declared to you, that he was induced to make this proposition to counteract the effect of a junction of some third person with Mr. B. by which his election to the future Parliament would have become precarious, and that it was to be esteemed a nullity if no such measures as he apprehended were entered into against him. It is not by a silent negative which must be proved by circumstances and induction that you have contradicted this, you have affirmed that Sir H. H. avowed to you in the most explicit terms a fixed determination that he never again would stand a joint candidate with Mr. B. whence it follows, that the ground of his overtures to you could not have been an apprehension that he would join some other person. In narratives of the same conversation, so diametrically opposite, we must wait till the full evidence

dence on both sides be produced, before we can totally acquiesce in either.

BUT I resume the consideration of the conditional article—that there was a treaty at that time between you and Sir H. H. is admitted on both sides, but his friends affirm that it was to have been referred to his constituents before it became finally binding. I have been informed that there was a third person present at a conversation between you and Sir H. H. upon this subject, and that he has asserted that there was such reserve: though I have endeavoured to procure further information upon this head, I have not yet received it; but I must admit that this collective evidence, in its present state, carries such an appearance of probability, as to determine my opinion as to the matter of fact. However, the friends of Sir H. H. assert that there was such a condition, and I beg you will be prepared with an answer to such an expostulation as this from them: you have virtually denied the existence of this proviso in your agreement: there are cases, Sir, in which voluntary suppression has the total criminality of declared falsehood

hood; and probabilities upon which the most lenient judgement will reject all apology from defect of memory. When she sees resentment subsisting through a number of years, which should gradually have worn it away, and at last acquiring strength to take accusation to itself to wound its object, she believes the whole to be of a piece; believes suppression in such a character to be voluntary falsehood, and forgets the mildness she loves in indignant severity.—To deny the condition ever to have existed will be of little use; a prevaricating negative (it will be replied) cannot be employed twice with temporary success; its efficacy is worn out by the first experiment.

But perhaps (they will continue) the grounds of your resentment might form, though not a justification, yet an apology for your mode of pursuing it; let us give this pretension a fair hearing. Sir H. H. after your treaty, joins Mr. B. without giving you information of his not being able to carry the measures he had concerted with you into execution, or communicating to you the new ones he had entered into.—You were then his friend, and if you had

had been properly consulted, would, very probably, have acquiesced in both. He was certainly wrong to omit it. But when we have to tell a man, I have raised your expectations very high, but circumstances compel me to desert them; we make such a declaration with extreme reluctance, and put off the evil day of apology as long as possible. Friendship would have felt the situation, and excused it directly; punctilio would have pouted half an hour; but what are we to call that principle which aggravates such an offence into an inexpressible injury? What defence can you establish against such remonstrances? You cannot plead that it was public principle that determined you in the part you acted; that is uniform in its operations; and in the country where your natural force lies, you support, with all your weight, candidates of an opposite political character; it was not private friendship; your original treaty could only succeed by the subversion of the interest of those with whom you now joined. You had repeatedly professed yourself determined to oppose Sir H. H. and your resentment was the bond of union which connected you with the other side

sides; yet by a singular infelicity, that resentment tended to support him.

CONTEMPT itself, Sir, views certain situations and certain degrees of dishonour with a little pity. On which side have you earned apology or protection?—Go to your new allies; what can they say for you? By endeavouring to make us the instruments of his resentment, and wanting firmness to meet the necessary consequence of the step he had taken, by a prevaricating disavowal of what he had authorized us to declare, he put arms into the hands of our opponents; nor could his apparent retracting at Johnson's be expiated by his half re-retracting at Tuck's—Go to your old friends; solicit them by the merits of having betrayed private confidence to do them the utmost injury in your power; plead your taking crimination to yourself to ensure the blow; appeal to their conviction of the infidelity of suppressing part of an account, the only means by which it could be turned against them; I do not tell you the event of your application, your imagination will anticipate it.

I HARDLY

I HARDLY know what directions to give you with relation to this public remonstrance addressed to you : a weak defence may disappoint your expectations as much as an ungrounded attack : I rather advise you to continue quiet at ———. No competition engages the attention of the public if the competitors want a certain degree of dignity ; the son of a little sadder in Norwich, who finds himself by chance in a situation above his expectations, and the son of a little retail shopkeeper in a middling market town, accidentally become a kind of a land-steward-like gentleman, are opponents to fix the eyes of the world upon them for a very little time ; a sudden squall will make the mud at the bottom of a piece of water appear on the top, but when it is over it presently subsides again. I am with those sentiments you very justly are entitled to, &c.

